

Thomas M. Holm Acceptance Speech  
Presentation of Archivist Award  
by the Archivist of the United States, John Carlin  
Ronald Reagan Building  
Washington, D.C.  
May 13, 2003

I would like to make a few quick comments today, first on behalf of the U.S. Geological Survey and the EROS Data Center and especially on behalf of the many talented and dedicated staff at the EROS Data Center in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, that truly embrace – on a daily basis – the many challenges they face in achieving “excellence in records management” -- Thank you very much for this special recognition.

John Faundeen, the Archivist at the EROS Data Center and I have come across a number of quotes on archiving over the years – one that stands out and one that we believe truly epitomizes the U.S. Geological Survey’s approach to records management is from Sir Arthur G. Doughty, a Dominion Archivist from Canada from 1904-1935. He said “Of all national assets, archives are the most precious; they are the gift of one generation to another and the extent of care of them marks the extent of our civilization.”

In the nomination letter, Mr. Carlin read about some of those “gifts” that we have responsibility for after 30 years of managing and preserving records and data at EROS. Meaning 2003 marks our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the EROS Data Center. In these 30 years our archiving responsibilities have gone from a very modest beginning to what is today the Nation’s Archive for Land Remote Sensing Data, which is the largest “civilian” archive of remotely sensed land data in the world. Yet, we are not done, our archives are growing at a rate of 2.5 terabytes per day – therefore, good records management is not just a goal – it is a requirement. The “signature” data set in our archives – the one that started it all -- is from the Landsat satellite program, which has collected an uninterrupted and consistent set of earth observation data of the land surfaces of the world for the past 31 straight years. With the successful launch of Landsat 7 in 1999, and with the intent to continue the legacy of the Landsat program through a joint NASA/USGS and industry partnership, we hope to be collecting, archiving, and distributing Landsat-like and other remotely sensed land data for the next 30 years, in fact for many generations to come.

Finally, I want to leave you with a special quote, one that comes from South Dakota – it is a Native American – Lakota – saying that is something like this – “If somebody makes you a gift, no matter how valuable it might be, he did not mean for it to grow old along with you.” He expected you to use it – then when you chose to honor someone else and yourself, he gave it with that expectation – as much as saying, “I have owned this for some time. You own it next, and when you wish to make a gift, pass it on.”

We believe at the U.S. Geological Survey and EROS Data Center that we are truly caring for a gift that we intend to preserve and pass on so generations to come can benefit from this National Treasure. Again, thank you!